[NOW FIRST PUBLISHED]

LOVE'S LABOUR WON:

AN EVENTFUL STORY.

BY JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE BLACK WATCH." "FAIRER THAN A FAIRY," ETC., ETC.

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CHAPTER XLIX.—THE WANDERER.

Crossing the open space, which he knew to be a field, he vaulted over a low boundary wall, followed closely by his dog, now barking wildly and joyously with a full sense of freedom, and found himself in a roadway which led off right and left—he knew not to where, nor cared, so that in either direction he get away from his present perilous locality.

Glancing it, he hurried on a little to the left, and then with a caution beyond his years, paused and listened intently to learn whether his escape had been discovered or if he was followed. Not a sound—not a footfall broke the silence that reigned around him. He looked sharply about also, but no one was to be seen; so Dick trod on, or ran rather, until he became breathless.

The whole of the past few hours seemed a kind of nightmare to Dick—a nightmare with only one sympathetic figure in it, that of the kindly sergeant, who he hoped might not get into a scrape through his disappearance, as Dick's ideas of military law were very cloudy; but he felt high exultation at the idea of baffling Mr. Pugwash, and also of eluding forever Corporal Gutters, whose visits to the Constable's room he never doubted had direct reference to getting Bingo into his hands, for sale or some other nefarious purpose.

Such a story of his adventures he would have to tell Melanie and Reggie.

But when should he see either again? Tears started to his eyes at this reflection; he would not return to his uncle's house, perhaps to find there a warrant for his arrest, issued by the tyrannical Pugwash—for Dick had a shrewd, but unpleasant suspicion, that by his flight, after taking the enigmatical shilling of which he had heard so much, he was somewhat of a deserter.

Anyway, he would return that coin, or the value thereof, to Sergeant Hawksley, if he could; and then, he thought, the compact would be ended.

Past houses and homes, the windows of which were closed and dark, and the inmates of which were sunk in sleep, Dick walked on—he knew not whither. He felt cold—miserably so—and all the more when the hours approached morning. He knew not how many miles he had traversed, and supposed they must be many; yet he had not placed a very great distance between himself and Woodstock after all, as it eventually proved, for after passing a mile or so beyond Charlbury, a little market town, he got into a network of lonely lanes that led him partially back in the direction he had come from. High in the sky rode the queen of night, "wading," as Scott describes it, through fleecy clouds, peering down apparently at the lonely wayfarer, between the bare, black hedge-rows of the deep old English lanes, and flooding all the long white fields and quaint little paddocks with silver.

He discovered an empty cattle-shed in the sheltered corner of a paddock and crept therein for warmth and to escape the biting wind, which had now become keen and frosty, to add to his misery and enhance the conviction that all the romance of which he once had fancied himself the hero had evaporated.

No brilliant or racy adventure had come to Dick, which, after all he had read of the wild peril and daring faced by youthful heroes, was rather disgusting to a boy of pluck and spirit; and his teeth chattered as he sunk among a quantity of dry straw in a corner and, being well nigh worn out, dropped into an uneasy slumber.

When he awoke the sun was shining brightly in a blue and unclouded sky and a frosty rime covered all the landscape. There had been a slight fall of snow in the night and amid it the little footprints of the robin and the deeper indentments of the long-eared hare were visible to the practised eye of Dick as he came forth, shivering and reluctantly, without wrapper or overcoat, and betook him again to the highway that was to lead him he knew not where.

To cultivate a little warmth, he attempted to run; but his steps were staggering and uncertain now. Anon he passed a little pond by the wayside. It was overshadowed by some pollard willows—those hideous features in the Dutch and English landscape—but upon it was a group of children belonging to an adjacent farm, sliding to and fro, happy, joyous, full of frolic and life, with noise, laughter and apple-red cheeks; and pausing for a minute or two, Dick watched them wistfully, enviously.

Suddenly there was a mingled yell of terror—the ice, which was slight and thin, cracked from end to end. A little girl fell in, and the rest fled with cries of terror and dismay, leaving her to her fate.

Amid the broken ice, the child rose and sank again while the shrieks of a woman were heard:

"Oh, my child—my poor child—she is under the ice now, and I—I cannot swim!"

"But I can," cried Dick; "and I'll save her too!"

Without the hesitation of a moment he went headlong into the chasm—for the pond was deep—and the woman continued to shriek and shudder and wring her hands, as she saw Dick, struggling amid the broken ice and whirling water, grasp, once, twice and thrice, a dark object below the surface, and then rise with his face cut by a sharp fragment; but after a third attempt he got the little girl to land and placed her, voiceless and all but senseless with cold and terror, in the arms of her mother, who, in the mental agony of the moment, forgot to give the preserver a word of thanks, but rolled her apron round the dripping, rescued child and bore her off towards the house.

Drenched, the icy water pouring from his clothes, more cold and more miserable than ever, chilled to the very marrow of his bones, the unfortunate Dick Talbot looked wistfully, helplessly and hopelessly after her.

He was about to follow, and in the humility that was born of loneliness and misery to seek for food and warmth at the ruddy fire, the steady radiance of which he saw streaming from a mullioned window on the frosty atmosphere and the bleak waste of wintry fields, when his eye caught sight of something red upon the adjacent highway.

Whether it was the cost of a soldier or aught else, Dick never thought of waiting to see; but thinking only of pursuit and re-capture, he glanced wildly about him for a place of concealment.

Near the pond was a barn, above which was evidently a spacious loft, to which a ladder gave access. Staggering like a drunken man, he scrambled up the ladder, cast it down after doing so, and found himself in a dry and cosy place that was piled nearly to the roof with straw, fodder for the cattle below; and there, after wringing as best he could, the water from his coat and trousers, he burrowed, as he had done on the first night of his flight, for warmth; and then a faintness came over him, the result of all he had undergone—anxiety, weariness, dread, and lack of that sufficient repose so necessary for the young; but now sleep—the sole luxury of the poor and the toil-worn—induced by comparative comfort, came upon Dick, and his dog crept close beside him.

He must have lain thus for some hours.

When full consciousness returned, he knew not what the time was, whether midnight or the early winter morning; but the short day had evidently passed, and complete darkness set in.

He knew perfectly where he was, but lay still, feeling, the while, every limb stiff and sore; and it was something like a miracle that fever did not attack him. He was about to doze off again when he was roused by the vehement yelping of Bingo, whom he found affectionately licking his hands and face; and then the more furious barking of the dog thoroughly aroused him.

A red, hazy light flashed along the loft in which he lay, showing the bare and cobwebby rafters above, the piled straw below, and a couple of men making their way toward him, one armed with a double-barrelled gun and the other with a pitchfork. The first, by his costume, appeared to be a farmer, in shooting-coat, ample waistcoat and long gaiters, fat, cozy and well-to-do looking; the other a shock-headed yokel in knee-breeches, hob-nailed shoes, and the inevitable smock frock, which, as it is the attire of the Norman peasants, probably came into England with her conquerers.

"Come, tumble up!" cried the farmer, angrily. "How many more of you are there among that straw?"

A great alarm fell upon Dick, and all his spirit had departed now. Tears started to his eyes again, as he thought of Melanie and his poor lame brother, both so loving and tender.

"Yes," he muttered; "I shall be murdered now, I suppose, and no one will hear of it—how or where?"

"Tumble up and toddle out, I say!" cried the farmer again, striking the butt end of his gun on the floor. "You are one of those rascally tramps that steal my hens and set my barns a fire by smoking among the hay and straw. Off with you all, or I shall summon the police!"

"All?—I am here alone, sir," said Dick, staggering up with difficulty, and half-blinded by the glare of the lantern held before his eyes.

"There ain't no more than this boy, Mr. Mopps," said the yokel, after peering about and prodding the straw with his pitchfork.

"Where do you come from—who are your friends, you young warmint?"

"Oh, sir," said Dick, now almost incapable of standing, "do be kind, please; I have neither father nor mother nor home."

This broke down the indignation of the farmer, who of late had suffered much from the depredations of "tramps," as he called them, who had robbed his hen roosts, and fired his haystacks more than once by the reckless use of lighted matches; but he was a kind hearted man and saw that the boy, if pale, sorely fagged and "seedy" in aspect, was a handsome one, with crisp golden hair, and honest, fearless blue eyes.

"Come down from this place and let us have a look at you," said he, loth to become too pitiful suddenly; and Dick followed him from the loft down the ladder, into the keen air of the winter evening, where he fell in a heap, half lifeless on the ground.

"Wife! wife! look here!" cried Farmer Mopps, in great dismay, as he carried Dick into the kitchen and set him in a chair near the fire.

"Oh, mammy," cried a little girl, peeping fearfully at him, "this is the boy—the boy who pulled me out of the water!"

"And who ran away before I could thank him," exclaimed the farmer's wife. "So he is, John—the same boy—poor child, he looks like death."

"Dang it," cried the farmer, "is this the case? Was it you that saved my little lass from the duck pond?"

But Dick was past responding; he could only gasp an assent, while the smaller children gathered round him in fear and wonder, but the unwonted warmth brought back circulation, life and energy to Dick quickly now, amid the many comforts of the spacious farm kitchen.

Long before the present time, the farm house had been a manor, and hence was huge, rambling, straggling and very quaint, but very comfortable. There were spacious old wainscotted parlors, where many a glass of old port had been drunk to "the king over the water, and the confusion of all Hanover rats," and where the squires of the past had hung their swords, their whips and their hunting gear, but were now used as storage rooms for bacon and apples, potatoes and lumber.

The family of Farmer Mopps, it would appear, were just about to sup when Bingo's barking had sounded an alarm and drawn attention to the supposed tramp in the straw-loft.

A fire blazed up the spacious chimney, which was lined by old blue Delft tiles; the red brick floor was closely swept and slightly sanded, yet not a foot-step had marred its perfect cleanness and neatness; a snow-white cloth covered the heavy oaken table, and thereon were tea and hot cakes for the children, cold beef, pie, and a tankard of brown October for the farmer. So ere long Dick found himself in clover, thoroughly renovated, and in the eyes of the old couple the little hero of the house, as the saver of their eldest daughter from the depths of the duck pond.

On being questioned about himself, he became unusually reserved for his years, and passing over his military aspirations and the episode connected therewith, he only stated that he had run away from home in consequence of ill treatment; and received the unpalatable advice that it was his duty to return to that home at once, wherever it was.

Burly Farmer Mopps was full of fun and jollity, and sung merrily to his youngest child, who crowed upon his knee. Among other ditties was one which was painted upon his huge ale tankard, a vessel more than a hundred years old, and he carolled it out with great gusto:

Let the wealthy and great
Roll in splendor and state,
I envy them not, I declare it;
I own my own lamb,
My chickens and ham,
I shear my own fleece and I wear it.

I have lawns, I have bowers,
I have fruits and sweet flowers,
And the lark is my morning alarmer;
So sing, jolly boys, now,
Here's God bless the plow,
With long life and good luck to the farmer."

Meanwhile, Dick's four-footed companion crouched by the genial fire—he had not seen one for some time past—and the children assiduously stuffed him with cake and scraps of meat.

"A good dog!" said the farmer, approvingly. "I had just such a terrier once—a Scotch one he was—and he went up a drain after a rat, till he got wedged in somehow, and had to be dug out by the shovel. Four men were two hours at it; and he was never a hair the worse."

Betimes the household of Farmer Mopps, whose sister-in-law was housekeeper at Ravensbourne hall, were all abed. A comfortable sleeping-place was assigned to Dick, whom the farmer, after a conference with his wife and with her earnest concurrence, resolved to take to his friends on the morrow, whether he desired it or not; but others, whose influence was unthought of then, were fated to come into the affairs of the young wanderer, for the early breakfast had scarcely been partaken of next day, when, to the consternation of all, there appeared in the farm kitchen the smock-frocked yokel, accompanied by Corporal Gutters, of the R. W. F. L. W. O. Regiment, and a rural constable.

The two former had met at a roadside tavern; and the corporal, on hearing the boor detailing, with much exaggeration and horse-laughter, the episode of the discovery in the loft, and that there was a boy and a dog in the case, never doubted who the wanderer was, and inspired by the hope of a reward, had followed the trail at once.

"My eye!" he exclaimed on seeing Dick; "you do look like a ghost down on its luck."

"Now, what may you want, my man?" asked Farmer Mopps, pausing with a tankard in hand.

"Only that 'ere young cove," replied the corporal, eyeing with malice and triumph the shrinking Dick.

"Why—and for what?"

"Punishment! He has bolted—mizzled—deserted the Queen's service, that is all."

"A deserter—this child!" exclaimed the farmer's buxom wife, starting up.

"Precisely. Child—he's one of the devil's own kind, that's wot he is; and he must come along with us—double quick, too!" he added, with a glance of appeal to the tall stolid-visaged constable.

All the children now shrieked and yelled, believing that Dick and his dog too were to be done to death, as deserters.

"Lookee here," said the bluff farmer. "I want none of your larks, my young fellow. This is all stuff; or if a little money—"

"Money won't do nothing!" said the strippling corporal, adopting a bullying tone; "he must go into the custody of this 'ere constable till we gets a suitable h'escort to 'eadquarters."

"And what may the penalty be for a boy like this giving you the slip?"

"Hanging, maybe; and too good for him," said the corporal with a grin, while the cries of the children were heard again, to his great delight.

"I want none of your chaff, you young cad!" said the farmer, assuming his hat and ample great coat. "Where is the boy to go to?" he asked, turning to the constable.

"Back to Woodstock, sir. It must be, as the corporal says it."

Dick's heart sank. He thought of Mr. Plantagenet Pugwash, and Pugwash only.

"John," cried the farmer's wife, "have the horse put to the dog-cart, go back with the boy to the town, and see an end of this folly—for folly it must be," she added, with a hostile glance at Gutters.

So in ten minutes more Dick found himself, like one in a dream, but comfortably tucked up in a warm rug, being bowled back through the keen frosty air to Woodstock, with Bingo between his knees and the corporal and constable seated behind him—a proximity to the civil power by no means to the taste of the Whitechapel warrior. Farmer Mopps drove rapidly and Dick soon saw the tower of the old Chantry Church, and heard its pretty peal of bells—saw again the streets, the town hall with its piazza, and the place from which he had effected his escape, as it seemed now in vain.

Now Dick had heard of terrible things being done to deserters—and he was one! He might be shot perhaps—blown from a gun. What had he not read of in the tales of war and terror published for the behoof of boys?

He had seen an engraving—who has not seen it?—of a deserter who declined to have his eyes blind folded, on one knee before a dreadful platoon of musketry, with his dog rearing against him, to be shot also—just as Bingo would do in that supreme moment; and Dick almost wept as he thought of his own demise in this fashion, before a squad of the R. W. F. L. W. O. commanded by the inexorable Corporal Gutters.

But few things in this world happen exactly in the way we expect them to do.

The farmer asked to see a justice of the peace. He was told that one was sitting in court now—Pugwash, as Dick's "prophetic soul" feared—and he was lugged, rather than conducted, by the Corporal into the justice room again, and lifting up his eyes to the dreaded bench, he saw, not the grotesque and plebian-looking soapboiler in the central chair thereof, but the gentlemanly presence, suave and pleasant face of Sir Brisco Braybrooke, with his bushy eyebrows and snow-white mustache.

"Dick!" he exclaimed, "Dick Talbot—what the deuce is this? Where is the charge-sheet—what is the matter? Where have you been hiding yourself all this time, you young rogue?"

For days and nights Dick had never had his clothes off, and their sodden aspect gave him a rather deplorable look just then.

His story was soon told.

"Leave the matter to me," said the Baronet. "Corporal, you may go, but send here Sergeant Hawksley. I shall arrange all this."

And so it was duly arranged by the influence, advice and money of Sir Brisco; and instead of being handed over, as he feared, to the tender mercies of Corporal Albert Edward Gutters, Dick found himself being driven homeward that evening in the well-hung carriage of the friendly baronet, who laughed heartily at all his adventures and the present end of his visions of military glory.

Great was the joy of Melanie at the sudden restoration of the wanderer, her "lost boy" as she called him; but this new debt of gratitude to Sir Brisco Braybrooke was a source of perplexity to her, lessened, however, just then by the fortunate absence of her uncle, who would have made it a reason for indulging in his usual taunts, advice and the urgence of his matrimonial views and wishes.

"You shall be a soldier yet, Dick, if you choose; I will send you to Sandhurst as a cadet," were the parting word of Sir Brisco.

CHAPTER L.—MARRIAGE BELLS.

The preparations for Amy Brendon's marriage had meanwhile gone on apace. All was getting fast ready now; and her Hussar, Horace Musgrave, looking handsome and more like a Hussar than ever, even after his woeful "smash up" in the hurdle race, had come to Stockencross, accompanied by his groomsman, one of the Prince's Own—with a bracelet for the bride; one of the most beautiful Bond street could furnish—and taken up his quarters with his kinsman at Ravensbourne hall. There, too, had come the bright Hilda Tremayne, with her—it is difficult to say—choice (she had smiled on so many), whose initials had caused such dismay to Amy in the past time.

So the wedding-day came at last; a bright and clear day, early in December. The whole village of Stockencross was astir betimes; and colored mottoes, garlands of false flowers and brilnt streamers gave a picturesque appearance to the little street overlooked by the ancient church on its green knoll.

Amy had but two attendants, Melanie and Miss Aurora Pugwash, judiciously invited to be a bridesmaid by Mr. Brendon, as the daughter of a very wealthy parishioner, whose wedding gift far, far eclipsed the poor offering of Melanie. But the next marriage at which the latter officiated she hoped would be her own.

Her own!

How little could she then foresee when, where and how she was to figure as a bride.

The floral wealth of Sir Brisco's conservatories had been lavished on the decoration of the old village church, as his pineries and vineries had made the elegance and luxury of the bridal breakfast.

Dick Talbot—marriages were of small importance to him, save in so far as a huge piece of the cake was concerned—had gone on a ramble in the woods; and his brother Reginald was alone—alone with all his own sad thoughts after a sleepless and weary night, for being incapable of all exercise, repose came to him fitfully and in snatches; and on this morning in one of these, he had dreamt of Amy Brendon.

He heard her voice talking to him kindly and pitifully, though he knew not the words she used.

He touched her thick dark hair with his thin, wasted fingers, and played with the piquante fringe that curled nearly to her bright and laughing eyes; and ere her face began to fade away, he felt—yes, actually seemed to feel—the touch of her lips, in a farewell kiss, softly and glowingly upon his own; and he awoke with a start and a half-stifled cry, to find it was her wedding morning.

And now, with the memory of that vivid and tantalizing dream keenly in his mind, he sat near the open window, heedless of the frosty air, reclining on his couch in his usual helplessness, and listening for the passing sounds that came from the distant village.

He reviewed his past life since he had known her, especially since he had come home, a helpless cripple from the coast of Egypt, doomed to beggary by the very government for which he had lost health and hope. He thought over the time when he had rejoiced in her society and in the light of her beauty and her grave and winning manner shed around him, till the blow struck his heart, when Musgrave came and he knew that she was engaged—was to be married.

How he felt none knew save himself. Better, he thought, to have been struck blind—yes, stone dead. He would have avoided her, after that news came—avoided her society and escaped the world; but he was helpless as a child.

All the love of his heart had gone forth to her, allured by her winning ways, her sisterly bearing to him—for Amy never meant or imagined it could be more. It was a perfect love, as he neither hoped nor looked for any return. Her presence to him had been as sunshine cast about the gloom of his existence; and in his silent worship he would cheerfully have laid down his life for Amy, if by doing so he could have served her.

His emotions were expressed in the words of Shelley's serenade, as he had often heard her sing it:

I rise from dreams of thee,
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright;
I rise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?—
To thy window-chamber, sweet.

Oh lift me from the grass—
I die—I faint—I fall!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas,
My heart beats loud and fast;
Oh press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.

The blow he so long expected had fallen at last, and the girl he could only love in secret was lost to him more than ever.

In his dumb despair he now realized to the full how great and how futile that love had been. Those two were together now; ere long they would pass side by side from the altar where her father had given her away; and ere long the new made bridegroom would be worshiping the bright beauty of her sunny little face, his arm encircling her waist, and his kisses would be where his—Reginald's—had never been, on her brow, her hair, her lips: while he was here, on his couch, crushed, lonely, desolate and longing only for death.

Suddenly the chimes rang out joyously and merrily in the square, ivied tower of the village church; but the sound brought no message of gladness or peace to the ear of Reginald Talbot. It came rather like the muffled knell that announces the hour of doom to the dying.

He made a wild essay, as if he would start to his feet—instinct with emotion, convulsed by an inward struggle—only to sink back among his cushions; while the old and attached servant, Bethia Barlow, ignorant of his thoughts, of all he felt and endured, burst in exclaiming:

"The joy bells—the marriage bells of Miss Amy—bless her little heart. You hear them, Master Reginald," she added, as if he was still a boy, as with clash and clang the notes came upon the frosty air through the open window, where she had swept away the snow, that Melanie might feed the robins as usual.

Intent only on listening to the wedding chimes and the sound of cheering that came from the village, she did not remark the changed appearance of the unhappy young man, who looked, as he felt, dying.

As he reclined back, with closed eyes, he hoped the fiat had gone forth that would give peace to his overtaxed heart and, so far as this world is concerned, oblivion to his soul.

A fit had come upon him—one from which he was long in rallying; and the dreadful announcement that he "was gone" were the first tidings that met Melanie on her return from the festivities at the vicarage.

But Reginald did not die, though left in a more prostrate condition than ever; and another shock of misery now awaited the unfortunate Melanie.

[*To be Continued Next Week.*]

A BLOODLESS MAN.

The German Army Claims a Wonderful Phenomenon.

La Estrella de Panama.

Not many miles from Berlin there lives a man who, if what report says of him be true, is certainly one of the most remarkable phenomena on record. The papers state as a positive fact that he has no blood in his veins, and that a committee of the leading physicians and scientists have declared their inability to account for this extraordinary circumstance. The man is a corporal in the German army, and goes by the name of Otto Schreiber. He himself was quite unconscious of his bloodless condition until two months ago, when he fought a duel with a fellow soldier. His opponent ran his sword through his body, without, however, drawing any blood, and the "patient" seemed not a bit the worst. The man was so taken by surprise that Otto had no trouble in killing him. Since that time the comrades of the corporal have been careful not to tread on his toes, and on no consideration to accept a challenge from him. He was submitted to a severe test at a medical institute in Berlin. A knife was thrust into his mouth, the point coming out at the back of the neck. No a drop of blood was spilled, and Otto felt no pain during the operating. The gentlemen who examined him are now fully convinced that there are many things in heaven and earth they never dreamed of. Otto Schreiber intends, as soon as his time is up (next year), to show himself in the principal cities of Europe.

LIARS AND LYING.

Ella Wheeler Says Liars are More Often Born than Made—Fashionable Lies that Do Not Count.

Some Different Types of Liars—Lying Like the Opium Habit—Women with Whom Lying is a Disease.

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"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

We are all liars to a greater or less degree, but that lamentable fact does not lessen the enormity of the crime.

I once saw a charming lady, in the presence of several guests whom she had been delightfully entertaining, take a card from her servant's hand, scan it with a slight frown, and return it, saying: "Tell the gentleman I have gone to bed with a violent headache." The servant bowed and conveyed the message—thus increasing the number of liars by two.

Fashionable lies of this kind are not supposed to count in the catalogue of sins, but it seems to me they are like parasites which destroy the delicate leaves of a plant after a time. They injure and blunt the finer perceptions of right and wrong.

A gentleman laid a weger with a lady the other evening that she could not live through the following day without lying, unless she hurt the feelings of some of her friends by seeming rudeness.

She lost the wager, declaring that she found polite lies absolutely necessary, as he had said. I do not believe them necessary, however, and I am confident we would win and retain more friends in the long run if we built our daily lives on a foundation of absolute truthfulness.

The moment I detect man or woman in a lie, however trivial, my interest and respect is lessened, and I am sure other people are influenced in the same way.

The moment my own lips have uttered a polite lie I feel a decided lessening of regard for myself, and am conscious that silence or tact could have saved me from the foolish error.

The liar who possesses a good memory may make a success of his profession for years without detection. It is seldom, however, that the art of lying and the art of remembering are combined in one person.

I remember a woman in my own profession, who told me in our first interview that she had received $75 for a short article which had recently appeared. On our second meeting she spoke of the matter again, and said she received $50 for it. A few days later I heard her mention it to a third party as having brought her $25. I learned afterward that she was paid $15 for the article. Had she recollected her first statement I might never have doubted her word.

Lying is like the opium habit. I have known people who began to tell "white lies" for convenience, and ended by becoming the most absolute and shameless of liars on every occasion.

In some cases lying is a disease, and should be treated as such.

I know two ladies who are otherwise excellent in character, and both are valuable members of society. One is a devout church member in high standing, and foremost in all good works of charity.

Both these ladies seem physically and morally unable to tell the truth. When the truth would better serve their purposes, they choose a lie. They harm no one but themselves, as their lies are never malicious, and refer usually to their own affairs.

One of these ladies is fond of telling the most marvellous stories of herself and her friends, their remarkable adventures, their extensive wealth, their wide travels, their intimate acquaintance with renowned people. If you repeat these fairy stories after her you cover yourself with humiliation, as they are almost entirely fabrications of her brain. If you disprove her statements to her face she looks you in the eyes, and smiles, and emphatically declares you misunderstood her words. Her conversation is sparkling and bright, and you are amused and entertained highly, until you discover her gift for improvising.

The other lady's talent runs more in a mercantile channel. She makes a purchase in your presence for which she pays $10. Let a third person enter the room, and she declares smilingly that she has just paid $20 for the article. If you correct her she insists that you are mistaken. Her doctor's and dentist's bills, her servants' wages, the price of her bonnets and boots, are all subjects of exaggerated statements. She has, like the majority of liars, a memory like a sieve, and consequently contradicts herself a dozen times in as many hours. Her friends all acknowledge her unfortunate peculiarity, but she is so kind-hearted, and possesses so many other admirable traits that she is tolerated in spite of her lies.

It seems to me both of these ladies need the serious attention of some specialist on diseases of the brain.

I have heard an opinion expressed that women are less frank and truthful than men. If this is true it is due to their education. Women are taught to conceal and men to reveal their true natures from the cradle up. Women are taught that the world expects them to be statues of decorum, and that it is merciless to the one who by word, atmosphere or act indicates that she could step down from her pedestal.

Man is taught that he is a human being of varied passions, liable to fall into error, which the world quickly forgets and forgives. He tells the truth about his nature and his temptations, and the world listens, sympathizes, and admires.

Woe unto the woman who, no matter how free from sin, confesses to her best friends that she has ever in thought, even, been stirred from her role of absolute decorum. She is forevermore branded "doubtful." Consequently she hides from the world, and, if necessary, lies to conceal her real human self from detection. I have heard the objection offered that if we all speak absolute truth we must speak ill of many people. I do not believe it. There is no human being so depraved that good cannot be spoken of him. It would be an interesting experience if we should all experiment for an entire month in finding the excellent quality to mention in each person we meet, and keeping silence concerning his or her faults.

Silence, however, is often made to serve as the helpless handmaid of liars. I can imagine no more despicable lie than the one conveyed by silence when speech is needed to defend the reputation of some victim of malice or envy. Many a name has been shadowed by the significant silent lie of one who should have spoken the word of defense. I am afraid this is a phase of falsehood more feminine than masculine.

Liars, like poets, are more frequently born than made; but certain methods of education can increase or cure the malady. It is said that several of our great novelists were terrible liars in childhood. Their vivid imaginations portrayed events and scenes which they related as actual occurrences. Utilized in fiction their inborn propensity to exaggerate common events became valuable to the lovers of exciting fiction.

A child should be taught to consider a slight prevarication as a departure from morality, and strict truthfulness of speech, even in trival matters, as one of the highest virtues.

However lightly we may speak of telling "white lies," we all feel an instinctive respect for the man or woman who has won a reputation for sincere truthfulness, and we have but to build our own lives on the same foundation to be regarded in the same light.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

WEDDING RINGS.

Old Italian Wedding Rings and Superstitions About Them.

Popular Science Monthly.

But when the ring was not plain, precious stones of some kind constituted the settings; and when the selection of the stone was in question the dominance of fashion was absolute. In the fourteenth century a fanciful Italian writer on the mystic arts set forth the various gems, indicating also the month in which it was proper to wear particular stones in order to secure the best result. The idea took, and for some time it was the fashion in several Italian cities to have the precious stone of the ring determined by the month in which the bride was born. If in January, the stone was a garnet, believed to have the power of winning the wearer friends wherever she went. If in February, her ring was set with an amethyst, which not only promoted in her the quality of sincerity, but protected her from poison and from slanderous tongues. The bloodstone was for March, making her wise, and enabling her with patience to bear domestic cares; the diamond for April, keeping her heart innocent and pure so long as she wore the gem. An emerald, for May, made her a happy wife; while an agate for June, gave her health and protection from fairies and ghosts. If born in July, the stone was a ruby, which tended to keep her free from jealousy of her husband; while in August, the sardonyx made her happy in the maternal relation. In September, a sapphire was the proper stone, it preventing quarrels between the wedded pair; in October, a carbuncle was chosen to promote her love of home. The November-born bride wore a topaz, it having the gift of making her truthful and obedient to her husband; while in December the turquois insured her faithfulness. Among the German country folk, the last named stone is to the present day used as a setting for the betrothal ring, and, so long as it retains its color, is believed to indicate the constancy of the wearer.

Writing recently on the present discontent among the working people of the world, Mr. Ruskin said: "There is no remedy against this age of conquering selfishness, until it and all the thoughts of this generation are swept away—as all sin and folly must be—in our ultimate ruin. Live strongly and kindly; thinking of the cause of the poor always—all victory is in theirs."